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Mississippi: The Closed Society (column)

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MISSISSIPPI

The Closed Society

Jim Silver keeps a loaded shotgun in his Oxford, Miss., home. It is not for hunting; it is for protection. For 27 years Silver, a history professor at the University of Mississippi, has spoken out against the segregationist way of Mississippi life. The anonymous threats against him have been so numerous that he long ago lost count. He has been hauled before the Ole Miss board of trustees on Citizens Council charges ranging from practicing communism to insulting a Confederate general's memory. In Mississippi, he has been a lonely battle.

Last week, as he stepped down as president of the Southern Historical Association, Silver delivered a scathing attack on life in mid-20th century Mississippi. It was by all odds the finest engagement he has fought so far.

"Mississippi," said Silver, "has been on the defensive against inevitable social change for more than a century." He charged that the state's churches have hemmed and hawed between racial right and wrong, that lawyers and judges are confused about whether or not to obey federal courts, that legislators spend much of their time "devising legal subterfuges to keep the Negro in his place," and that business leadership has abdicated its power to the white Citizens Councils. Even in such a "closed society," Silver found, the Negro has made some gains—and will make more as he demands and is grudgingly accorded the right to vote. But Mississippi whites themselves have succeeded only in losing freedom. "The white man, determined to defend his way of life at all costs, no longer has freedom of choice in the realm of ideas because they must first be harmonized with the orthodoxy," said Silver.



HISTORIAN SILVER

Fighting a lonely battle against harmony.

TIME, NOVEMBER 15, 1963

By committing itself to defending the biracial system, he said, Mississippi has erected a "totalitarian society" that blocks change and causes social paralysis. "Thus the Mississippian, who prides himself on his individuality, lives in a climate where nonconformity is forbidden, where the white man is not free, where he does not dare to express a deviating opinion without looking over his shoulder."

At age 56, Silver was obviously risking his Ole Miss job with some nine years left before pensioned retirement. That made no difference. He was just plain fed up.

ARMED FORCES

Stormy Days for the Navy

When the sea winds howl and the ship wallows, the smart skipper heaves to and rides out the storm. By this standard, the Navy's new Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral David Lamar McDonald, 57, is as wise as they come.

Other admirals may saltily denounce the Pentagon's civilian bosses, but McDonald tries to make friends of them. While others are unnerved by the policies of Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, McDonald calls him "probably the best Defense Secretary ever." While admirals shiver their timbers in fear that Whiz Kid Alain Enthoven, 32 (who is conducting McNamara-requested cost-performance studies affecting the Navy's future), is trying to scuttle the fleet, McDonald takes him to the Navy-Notre Dame football game.

Friendship may work; at least hostility has not paid. And seldom has a new Chief of Naval Operations taken over at such a stormy time. Items:

► The Navy's top command is scrambled. McDonald himself succeeds Admiral George Anderson, whose option was dropped because he disagreed too often and too publicly with McNamara. While McDonald is popular, the manner of Anderson's ousting was hardly calculated to raise Navy morale. No sooner had McDonald assumed his new post than Navy Secretary Fred Korth was fired—for writing letters on his official stationery concerning business for his old employer in Fort Worth, the Continental National Bank. Whatever his faults, the admirals thought that Korth was on their side. Korth's successor, Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul Nitze, has already been forced onto the defensive, even before being confirmed as Navy Secretary. The Senate Armed Services Committee last week barraged Nitze with questions about statements he had made that some considered too liberal or pacifistic, postponed a vote on him.

► It does not even help to have an old Navy lieutenant in the White House. In a series of major command shifts, the Navy has lost responsibility for vast areas of the globe. Last week McNamara announced that the Army-Air Force Strike Command would take over top U.S. military authority in parts of the



ADMIRAL McDONALD

Saving the fleet at a football game.

Middle East, in Southern Asia, including India and Pakistan, and in all of Africa south of the Sahara. The Navy's Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean headquarters had previously held much of this authority.

► The Navy is anguished by McNamara's recent rejection of its request that its next carrier be built with a nuclear propulsion plant as was the two-year-old carrier *Enterprise*. The decision led some admirals to complain that the Navy cannot hope to have its second nuclear carrier in operation before 1971. And if the Navy has not gone nuclear by then, moans one, "it will be too late." The broader questions of just which type of ships should be nuclear and what role carriers should perform in the future are the subjects of Enthoven's ominous studies. The Navy fears that the answer will be a mere limited-war, show-the-flag role, which would mean few if any new carriers.

► The Navy is also upset by the seeming success of the massive "Operation Big Lift" that moved an Army division from the U.S. to Europe by air. Declares one top officer: "If they really think they can airlift a division into combat, or near combat, then the day of the Navy is over."

McDonald, a thin, quiet man who reached his job via Annapolis, naval aviation, carrier service and top European commands, is painfully aware of the Navy's problems, but feels he can weather the storm. He is convinced that the Navy's case is a reasonable one, that McNamara and his aides are reasonable men. Says he of McNamara's decisions: "If I simply cannot live with the policy, I will face my superior with the fact and will either get his modification of the policy or will leave my job."

Meanwhile, about the only thing that can bring a smile to an admiral's face these days is the sight of Navy Quarterback Roger Staubach.